

## **Responding to Violence in Workplace**

### **1. Procedures when responding to Violence in Workplace (VIW) incidents:**

- a. When a VIW incident occurs, the first person that becomes aware of it shall immediately notify someone of authority, (i.e., supervisory chain or Violence in Workplace Coordinator (VIWC)).
- b. If the situation threatens life and/or property and it is safe to do so, call 911 or Department of Emergency Services (803) 751-3113. The supervisor or commander is responsible for reporting the incident using the procedures listed below.
- c. Supervisors and commanders must report all VIW cases to the VIWC. The Threat Management Team members should report all incidents to the VIWC. Supervisors must contact L/MER for guidance on disciplinary actions.

### **Levels of Behavior and How to Respond:**

#### **A. Level One**

a. **Non-Physical Behavior.** Unwelcome behavior which creates an antagonistic or intimidating work environment or which unreasonably interferes with an individual's job performance and/or opportunities, but does not involve either physical contact or threat of physical harm. Examples may include:

1. Refusing to cooperate with those in authority.
2. Spreading rumors and gossip to harm others.
3. Consistently argues with or is belligerent towards others.
4. Constantly swears at others and making unwanted severe or persistent verbal hostility interfering with job performance.
5. Expressing anger by throwing or kicking objects in the workplace.

#### **B. Level One Response of Supervisory Chain.**

(1). **OBSERVE AND DOCUMENT** (in detail) the behavior in question soon after it happens.

(2). **REPORT** concerns to WVPC and other appropriate officials. If the offending person is an employee and is the reporting employee's immediate supervisor, the employee should notify the next level of supervision. If the offending person is not employee, the supervisor of the individual reporting the incident is still the appropriate individual to receive and provide initial response to the report.

(3). HANDLE the situation by CONTACTING L/MER if discipline is necessary. If the offending person is an employee, the supervisor should MEET with him or her to discuss concerns.

#### C. Level Two

a. Threats of harm (escalation of the situation). Behavior which threatens physical violence to others or which physically disrupts operations. Such behavior may also violate state or federal law. Examples may include, but are not limited to:

(1) Sabotages equipment and steals property.

(2) Verbalizing wishes to hurt employees and/or management; overt threats.

(5) Sends violent notes/emails to employees and/or management to communicate with intent to intimidate or harm.

(6) Sees self as victimized by the section (me against them).

(7) Possessing a weapon at work.

(8) Continuing LEVEL ONE behavior despite prior notice that the behavior is unwanted and offensive.

#### b. Level Two Response:

(1) DOCUMENT (in detail) the behavior in question immediately.

(2) IMMEDIATELY CONTACT the supervisor; the L/MER Specialist or a member of the Threat Management Team; and appropriate law enforcement or security officials.

(3) When necessary SECURE your own safety and the safety of others, including contacting people who are in danger (make sure emergency numbers for employees are kept up-to-date and accessible).

(4) When appropriate CONTACT others who can assist you such as VIWC or Employee Assistance Program Coordinator (EAPC).

#### D. Level Three

a. Violence-Physical harm (further escalation, usually resulting in an Emergency Response). Behavior which involves the use of physical violence or an imminent threat to inflict physical violence. This person frequently displays intense anger resulting in:

1. Recurrent suicidal threats, physical fights, locking up or physically restraining someone against his/her will.

2. Destruction of property

3. Utilization of weapons to harm others

4. Commits murder, rape arson, and/or any level of criminal assault.
5. Possession of a weapon at work.

b. Level Three Response-EMERGENCY

1. REMAIN CALM
2. First SECURE the safety of the victim.
3. CALL 911 and/or other appropriate emergency contacts for that particular facility, especially if the situation requires immediate aid of medical and/or law enforcement personnel.
4. COOPERATE with the law enforcement personnel when they have responded to the situation. Once law enforcement personnel are on the scene, they will assume control of the situation. Witnesses need to be prepared to provide a description of the violent or threatening individual, details of what was observed, and the exact location of the incident.
5. CONTACT the VIWC.

F. Responsibilities:

a. L/MER Specialist

- Provide supervisory training, which includes basic leadership skills, such as setting clear standards of conduct and performance, addressing employee problems promptly, and using the probationary period, performance counseling, disciplinary, alternative dispute resolution, and other management tools conscientiously.
- Provide technical expertise and consultation to help supervisors determine what course of administrative action is most appropriate in specific situations.
- Determine whether sufficient evidence exists to justify taking disciplinary action once the investigation of any misconduct is complete.

b. Employee Assistance Program Coordinator

- Provide short-term counseling and referral services to employees at no cost.
- Help in the prevention of workplace violence through:
  - Early involvement in organizational change.
  - Training employees in dealing with angry co-workers and customers, conflict resolution, and communication skills.
  - Training supervisors to deal with problems as soon as they surface without diagnosing the employee's problem.

- Consultation with supervisors to identify specific problem areas, develop action plans to resolve problems in the early stages, and encourage employees to contact the EAP for individual counseling.
- Consultation with incident response team when a potential for violence exists or an actual incident is reported.
- Participation on critical incident stress debriefings teams in the event of a violent situation.

c. Equal Employment Officer

- Provided training in conflict resolution, communication, and negotiation skills.
- Help supervisors determine proper reasonable accommodation.

d. Law Enforcement

- Identify in advance the types of situations that may occur and when and how law enforcement should be notified of an incident.
- Indicate whether law enforcement officers have jurisdictional restrictions and identify alternative law enforcement agencies that may be able to provide assistance.
- Indicate whether law enforcement officers have arrest authority.
- Provide threat assessment personnel who can assist the agency in determining the best way to protect personnel.
- Suggest safety and security measures that need to be implemented.
- Arrange for all-employee briefings or training on specific workplace violence issues.

e. Physical Security

- Serves as the liaison with law enforcement as well as the local expert on security matters.
- Conduct regular threat assessment surveys of the facility to determine the level of security preparedness and any gaps in the security posture.
- Serves as the facility security expert, keeping management advised on the risk of violence, the security gaps identified by threat assessments, and the means to close these gaps, including the latest technologies.
- Work with the facility personnel to improve the security level of the buildings, grounds, parking lots, etc.
- Train facility personnel in security measures and violence prevention techniques. Facility personnel should work closely with security staff to ensure buildings, areas, and grounds are safe for employees and visitors. This includes not only keeping buildings and grounds well maintained but participating with security personnel in threat assessment surveys, keeping management informed of the status of the physical plant, and providing budget requests with justification for security upgrades.

f. Managers and Supervisors

- Inform employees of installation workplace violence policies and procedures.
- Ensure that employees know specific procedures for dealing with workplace threats and emergencies, and how to contact police, fire, and other safety and security officials.

- Ensure that employees with special needs are aware of emergency evacuation procedures and have assistance (as necessary) regarding emergency evacuation situations.
- Respond to potential threats and escalating situations by utilizing proper resources from the following: law enforcement and medical services, human resources staff, and the Employee Assistance Program.
- Take all threats seriously.
- Check prospective employees' references prior to hiring.
- Receive training from the EAPC on VIW.
- Coordinate with other co-located agencies to develop joint workplace violence prevention plans.

g. Garrison Commander

- Develop a policy statement that indicates the installation will not tolerate violence or disruptive behavior and that all reports of incidents will be taken seriously and dealt with appropriately.
- Provide mediation and other alternative dispute resolution (ADR) services to assist employees in resolving disputes.
- Ensure all workplace violence prevention and response materials are available to all employees and that all employees are aware of the procedures and instructions in them.
- Ensure that appropriate safety and law enforcement personnel have completed an on-site review of safety and security of buildings and offices.
- Provide adequate resources for employee training and awareness.
- Include workplace violence training in all employee orientation and supervisory training sessions.
- Provide funding for appropriate safety and security of employees.
- Ensure that performance standards of appropriate staff reflect the importance of workplace safety and security.
- Provide for briefings on workplace violence at staff meetings.